

BODIES

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PRESENTED

by

OR JOEL NEOERHOOO

MOORE COLLEGE
LIBRARY

on

*The
Back to God
Hour*

THE DENOMINATIONAL BROADCAST OF

THE REFORMED CHURCHES
OF
Australia and New Zealand



BODIES

... The body is... meant... for the Lord,
and the Lord for the body. Corinthians 6: 13

I'm always surprised at what a quarter will buy in some of the family magazines. These can be picked up in a supermarket every day. The recipes are extremely imaginative and I usually benefit whenever my wife experiments with one of them. Some of the ideas for remodeling and redecorating are extremely useful, too. If a person is interested in embroidery and embroidery, there's a lot that is worth while as well. And among all of this, one will find advertisements for courses and preparations that will help a person ... excuse me for bringing this up ... that will help a person in her bustline.

There are magazines, of course, that devote themselves to this kind of thing, but it always strikes me as rather out of place, amid all the wholesome articles and ads for toothpick holders and needlecraft kits, to run across a rather young woman who joyfully announces that she has dramatically altered her measurements in just eight weeks and there is a picture there to prove that her assertion is not wholly imaginary. There is something gross and repulsive about this; doesn't it strike you that way?

This does demonstrate though if nothing else, that there is a tremendous interest in the body these days. And flipping through the ordinary family oriented magazines confirms this, not only through the occasional startling claims of housewives and office girls who have increased their dimensions, but by all the other body related material that is being offered. This magazine I have on my desk, for

example, this is what I find on just the first three pages. Open the cover and inside there is a double page spread featuring fantastic anti-perspirant, then a full page describing a weight reducing program, and then a full page exalting a series of skin creams. Go on and one will find material related to certain bodily functions which programs like this one never mention. A few pages further and there's a double page spread on a new book one of the big magazine publishers is putting out called *The Body*, and you can examine it for 10 days absolutely free.

Nowadays we are fascinated by the shape of the human body, by its contours, its feel, its softness, its firmness. This is a day in which the human body is being glorified.

But is it really? With all the interest in the body, it is not really being glorified? In fact, I think that a case could be made that it is being degraded now as never before. Some of the emphases we have talked about are not really a glorification of the body at all, but an attempt to make it more an object, more fleshy, more animal even. Women's Lib has pointed this out. Women, we have been reminded, have become objects to be viewed and enjoyed in our sexist society. And I think that is right, don't you?

And you know, there is a strange death like element that runs through all of this. The heightened interest in the body is accompanied by a heightened interest in killing. Beautiful people are often associated with violence. Think of the Sharon Tate murder, think of the violence that throbs through these days, think of the women who lie murdered on the jackets of the paperbacks.

People are apparently Y<'ryconfus<'dho11 their bodies-about the hmyly. It is so close to them. They man.,\ as it clC'. elops, they shuclcln as it deteriorates. They appreciate youth and vicroranc1 shrinkhcforf' the blue'eins ofage.

Joyce' Carol OatC'shas a paragraph that catches the curiously mōrbid fascination people have \\ith thC'irbodies. It's in a short story called "Bodies," and shf' \\-rites ah011t skin. This is "-hat she says:

"Skin is an organ of the body. It consists of many layers of celNo one could haYe i vented it. Cells absorb moisture and lose mois ture: they pulsate in their o'n serrf't rhythm. in their ovd private time. Im·isible, clastic. Each hum;in being has his own skin, umq̄uc to him. It is a mystery. Someday a drad \\Oman will wear the skin that belonged to a livincr woman and it is the same skin exactly. The it deco1;1posf's The skin is the lllOst impermeable barrier of tēe body. It is ah·ays thirsty. Its thirst is insatlale. Human th1sts are satisfied from time to time but the t}urst of the human skin is ne\er satisfied so long as it lives."

It is true, isn't it, that right along \\ith the continual emphasis on the body these clays, there is an increasin_g interrist degrading it. It's not a timC' \\here the body is being glorified, though it is being emphasized. It is a time when people ran kill the bodies of the unborn without a second thought. It is a ti,ne \\hen people wantonly indulge thephysical lusts at great risks to their health and the health of their children. The use of alcohol and the use of cigarettes is growing in spite of the \\oy these drugs destroy the health of our hochoes. There is gh:ttony, and just _general carelessness

"ith rC'spert t<, our bodies these days. The same people,,ho go on crash diets and use strange courses to change their shapes, a year later dis sipate the lllselves.

People do such strange things \\ith their bodies. Why, it's not a time when the body is being glorified at all. It's being exploited, manipulated, playt.:dwith, but not respected and used properly.

Do you know \\hy? People have lost the true knO\ledge of their own bodies because they haYe lost the true knowledge of their souls. Many people don't even think we have souls. So they say, "Let's just enjoy material things, let's just enjoy our bodies " But thf'ir enjoyment turns to torture, and the beauty that they \\Orshipped becomes death-stained and ugly before their very eyes. The confusion that exists about our bodies is a reflection of the fusion we have about our souls.

Our bodies are very dose. Somewhere along the line everyone must achieve proper evalu ation of his body ... how he is going to rare for it, and handle it, and use it ... all this. We ran make so many mistakes with our bodies that can lead to unnappiness. Physical, mental, and emotional health are all related.

Now maybe you thought that the Christian faith couldn't possibly have anything to say about this subject, because, well, when we think about Christianity we generally think about spiritu;i] things. Part of the gospel is the gospel that relate to our bodies. If you know the fullness of the Christian faith you will understand yourself better. You will understand your body, too. Here, let me show you what I mean by using a brief sentence from Corin thians 6 in the New Testament. This is what

it says: 'The body is meant for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.'

To be perfectly frank with you, if you are confused by all the strange and contradictory messages about the body that are coming across to you in the magazines, the newspapers, the movies, and from your friends. Yes, there is only one way you will be able to come to understand your own person, and that is to understand what the Bible says. When it says that the body is for the Lord and the Lord for the body. You see, the Christian faith is not a spiritual faith at all, in the sense that it doesn't stress the importance of our bodies and counsels us to think only of heaven and the hereafter. Not at all. The salvation that Jesus Christ died on Calvary's cross to bring His people is a salvation that has profound meaning for their bodies, too. A Christian knows that his body is taken up in the great salvation, work of God.

Let me just mention three important teachings about the body that are very big in the Bible. We need each one of these if we are going to recover our sanity when it comes to our bodies.

Number one, when the Bible says the body is for the Lord, it announces that the human body is an instrument that has been created for a task, for a job, for a purpose. Take the beautiful sentence in Romans 12, for example, which says, "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." The body is considered the total package a person comes in. It is expressed in his external characteristics, but also in the mysterious inner work-

ings of his metabolism and all the wondrous processes that go on each day to make ordinary life possible. In addition, the body is viewed as something that includes thought, emotion, creative ability, everything that we experience within ourselves.

And this, God says, we must bring to Him, "hC'n He says that we should sacrifice it to His service. I Corinthians 6:13 explicitly announces that it is disobedience to God to use our bodies in the service of evil. And the context there is very explicit. Self-indulgence, immorality, unchastity, homosexuality, lust . . . all this is viewed as a use of the body which does not honor the high purpose for which it was created.

Your body belongs to God, to the Lord Jesus Christ ... use it therefore for Him. Use it for the establishment of His kingdom. But the trouble is, millions who are exposed to all the confusion about our bodies that we are getting these days don't know anything about Jesus. They don't know that He died on Calvary's cross in order that sinful men who repent of their sin might be redeemed and given a great task to do. Maybe you don't know about Christ's great work of salvation.

Then, I'm telling you now. Jesus died so that those who believe on Him might be delivered from all the foolishness in this world. You can be saved, not just from hell some day, but right now. And that will mean that your body can be used for things that are pure and holy and noble. You can begin to care for it properly so that you will be able to serve God better. You won't get carried away by the contradictory, immoral, confusing messages that are being sent out these days about our bodies.

The body of those who belong to the Lord

Jesus Christ ... their bodies belong to Jesus and their bodies can be used as His people serve Jesus and work and play as citizens of His kingdom.

Number two ... here's the second teaching in the Bible about the body ... about the bodies of those who believe in Jesus, I might add. And we just talked about what it means to believe in Him. I Corinthians 6:13 says not only that the body is for the Lord, but the Lord is for the body. This means that the great redemption Jesus died to make possible affects the body. This means that a Christian experiences physical renewal as he moves through life.

An interesting expression of this fact is found in II Corinthians 4:16 which says, "... We do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day." The Bible's point of view, you see, is that the exterior deterioration of one's body as he moves through time, or perhaps becomes the victim of a serious disease, is not the most important thing about him. We always look at the outside of people. We say a person is healthy when he looks good. The Bible views each man as a totality, and it may well be that a person who may appear very young and vigorous and healthy is actually decaying away within himself because his inner nature is small and impoverished.

People today are horrified with the possibility of growing old. They don't like to see their skin get dry and ... Tinkle. This is natural enough, but a Christian knows that these things are secondary. He knows that God is renewing him every day and he feels it.

I heard of an elderly man who was asked

once, "How are you?" He said, "Well, the outside of the body is getting pretty dilapidated, but the inside is getting new." That's the Christian view. This Christian view is beautiful and liberating. It frees people from all the foolish attention they are giving to elements of the body. The circle is absolutely conditional. Those of us who are Christians can only look at so-called beautiful holes and appendages that their bodies have. These are beautiful things as they do. The body is a part of the background of our life. They know that every health of the body is a victim of decay and dissolution. This is why there is the curious prohibition in physical beauty, and beauty is often associated with decay.

But those who know they have been redeemed by Jesus know that Jesus is for their body and He cares for them every moment. A few wrinkles and scars make no difference. Even the onslaught of ravishing physical disease cannot make them despondent. Jesus keeps renewing them. They see their old bodies as bodies that are ready to move toward more abundant life.

And now number three. Are you ready for the Christian view of the body? The Christian view of the body is that it is going to be raised again and glorified. We saw a few minutes ago that in spite of all the emphasis on the body today, it is not being glorified. It is being degraded. But those who confess their sins, repent, and flee to Jesus know that some day their bodies will be changed.

Listen to this Christian testimony found in the book of Philippians. "The Lord Jesus Christ ... will change our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power which en-

Don't you think it might help to take the Bible seriously to take Jesus seriously? You

Prepared for broadcast by Dr. Joel Nederhood
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MANILA

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